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A TREATISE OF WOOL,

AND THE

Manufacture of it:

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

Occasion'd upon a Discourse concerning the great *Abatements* of *Rents*, and *Low Value* of *Lands*.

Wherein is shewed how their Worth and Value may be advanced by the Improvement of the *Manufacture* and *Price* of our *English* WOOL.

Together with the PRESENTMENT of the Grand JURY of the County of *Somerset*, at the General Quarter Sessions begun at *Brewton* the Thirteenth Day of *January* 1684.

LONDON,

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A

TREATISE

OF

WOOL.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

SIR,

IT is now seven years since I publish'd a Treatise of this Nature; it came forth then accompanied with something concerning Hospitality, and the Consumption of our Cattel; But the Age at present being not that way inclin'd, I have wholly omitted that part; and shall only offer in this, that which concerns our *English* Wool, and the Manufacture of it. For I find that a great many are very busie about this Commodity, and the Trade of it; But yet I do not find any Proposals offered, whereby the Price of our *English* Wool may be advanc'd; I shall therefore lay down this Assertion; That the greatest cause of the Abatement of Rents, and low Value upon Lands at this day, (which I suppose every man that hath any is sensible of,) hath been the great fall, and low price of Wool for these few years past. Then on the contrary, the only way to raise our Rents, and to bring our Lands to their former worth and value again, must be by advancing the price of our *English* Wool. Now which way this is to be done, will be the Subject of this following Treatise; which is desired may be accepted, as it is freely offered (to wit) as the real intention of a true *English* man, for the benefit of his Native Country.

The Occasion of publishing this at this time, was meerly accidental; for being at *White-hall* some few Months since, I heard of great Complaints made, with a Petition to the King and Council, setting forth the Transportation of our Wool, to the great Prejudice of our Clothing Trade, and the ruining of our Poor for want of Work; with many

dismal Apprehensions of the evil Consequences thereof: but not one word offer'd which way either to advance the Trade of this our Woollen Manufacture, or to raise the Price of our *English* Wool; But the whole Design I perceived was for the Clothiers Advantage to buy Wool cheap, and for the Merchant and Drapers to have Cloth at a low price; both very destructive, not only to the Kingdom in General, but also to the Trade it self; as shall hereof be made appear.

The Complaint I confess was of great Concernment, that our Wool, and other Materials for the making of Cloth, as *Fuller's* Earth, *&c.* ought not to be exported; the many Acts of Parliament in all Ages since King *Edward* the Third, for preserving this Trade and Manufacture to our selves, and prohibiting under severe Penalties, the Transportation of our *English* Wool, is sufficient to convince us of what absolute Necessity the Manufacturing of our Wool was look'd upon to be, as to the Wealth and Trade of our *English* Nation; And what Advantage our Ancestors in former Ages (even to the times of the late Rebellion) made by this Trade of Cloth. The Account of the *Russia* and *Turkey* Company, but especially the *Hamborough* Company, which took off so many thousand Cloths yearly, may serve us only to bewail the present Decay of so great a Trade. So that our Business now is not only to prohibit the Exportation of our Wool, but more chiefly to advance the Trade and Sale of our Cloth; whereby the price of our *English* Wool may be raised again to what it was formerly worth. For to what purpose is it to keep all our own Wool at Home, and to admit all other Wool to come in *Gratis*; if we have not vent enough for that of our own growth. I confess it may sometimes enrich the Clothier by buying cheap, but I am sure it will impoverish the Gentlemen and Farmers, by selling at so low a price; therefore, if by the following Discourse our ancient Trade for this Commodity

may be restored, and our Wool brought to a more considerable price then it now bears, whereby the Rents and Revenues of the Kingdom may be increas'd, and our Lands brought to their former Worth and Value again; I hope this small Treatise may be accepted.

Sir, You may please to remember upon the Discourse we had on this Subject, that it was your desire I should give you the Heads and Substance thereof, against the next meeting of the Parliament; that as you found a convenient Opportunity and compliance with you herein, by some of your Fellow-Members, with whom you did intend first to advise, you would accordingly proceed in it for the Publick good: but the Business of the Popish Plot then breaking out, all things of this nature were then put off, and this also was laid aside. But meeting with this Opportunity, I thought it a very fit time to retrieve it; especially considering that neither our Wool, or our Clothing Trade have since advanc'd, but on the contrary grown worse and worse; even to so low an Ebb, that it is impossible to sink lower. And that it being at this time more particularly in his Majesties Royal hands, to dispose and regulate the sale of Cloth at that great and chiefest Market in the Kingdom for the same at *Blackwel-hall* in *London*, by appointing such Officers, and such Regulation of the sale of Cloth there, together with such Rules and Orders to be observed, both by the Clothier, Merchant, and Draper, according to the several Laws and Statutes heretofore made, for the Encouragement of this great Trade, as in his Princely Wisdom shall be thought most fit and convenient. And although many offers have been made of late years for *England's* Improvement, which shews that we are sufficiently sensible of our decaying Condition, if we could but tell how to help our selves; yet it is a very great Question whether several of those Designs might in the end prove for the real Good and Benefit of this Kingdom, as to endeavour the planting of

several

ſeveral Foreign Commodities, whereby to engroſs the Manufacture of other Nations to our ſelves; for the ſaving, as we alledge, many thouſands of pounds at home, which they coſt us abroad; and the cutting of ſo many Rivers to make them Navigable, through the very heart of moſt parts of the Kingdom, to *London*; whereby all our Trade and Carriage might paſs up and down without Waggons and Horſes, at far cheaper rates than now they do by them; with ſeveral other the like Projects, that carry with them fair Pretences of Thrift and good Husbandry; while on the other hand it might eaſily be made appear, that many of thoſe Deſigns would prove ſo diſadvantagious to us, notwithſtanding the ſpecious ſhew of Profit. That our Lands which are already fallen a fourth part of their ancient Worth and Value, would not then, in moſt parts of the Kingdom, yield the one half, eſpecially the Paſture and Meadow Grounds. For it is not the having all things of our own growth on the one hand, and the ſaving of our Money on the other can make us Rich; neither can our Increaſe and Plenty in ſome ſence be ſaid to be our Wealth, if we have not a ſuitable Vend and Conſumption thereof. Beſides, Nature hath otherwiſe provided, and ſo furniſh'd each particular part of the World with ſomething which the reſt want, whereby to preſerve a Friendſhip and Commerce together.

Sir, I have hinted at this, that the following Diſcourſe might meet with the leſs Prejudice, when the Deſign of it ſhall appear, that it is not for the prohibiting any Foreign Commodity, or for the engroſſing all within our own growth; but that which we call our own growth and Manufacture, may be ſpent, if not by others abroad, yet among our ſelves at home: And this I think is ſo reaſonable, that no Nation in the World, but will allow us that Liberty.

Let us now proceed to that which is intended in this following Diſcourſe; and in the firſt place, to ſhew how much our Eſtates and Rents are fallen from their former Value

within

within theſe few years, and what may probably be the Cauſes thereof, with ſome ways and means that may be conceived neceſſary to reſtore them to that value and eſteem again.

Firſt then, that our Rents are abated, and that the Value of our Lands are fallen, moſt mens particular experience will juſtifie me in the truth hereof; For from twenty years purchaſe, the uſual rate not many years ſince, they are now ſunk to eighteen at the higheſt; and in ſome places ſixteen or ſeventeen years purchaſe is the ſelling rate, and theſe very ſame Eſtates at a low under value; ſo that if we ſum up what an hundred pounds a year, the Rent well paid, was worth thirty or forty years ſince, in the beginning of the late Rebellious Wars, we ſhall find, that the real value of our Eſtates are a third part leſs than they were then; and but two parts of three, of what Money they would have yielded then, can now be raiſed where any man hath occaſion to ſell. For Example, Let an hundred pound a year be the ſtandard, the juſt value then that this hundred pound a year would have yielded at twenty years purchaſe, is two thouſand pound. Now there is twenty pound a year with the leaſt, and in many places thirty pound a year Abatement in Rent out of this hundred. We will touch the Sore as eaſie as poſſible, and allow but twenty *per Annum* abatement in Rent, ſo there remains but eighty pound, which at eighteen years purchaſe comes to 1440 pound; ſo that at this rate, here is near a third part loſt of the real Value what the Lands and Eſtates of the Kingdom were formerly worth. And this we may believe, that that Parliament about ſeven years ſince were very ſenſible of: Witneſs their many Debates in their ſeveral Seſſions about raiſing Money for his Majeſties ſupplies, and the great care the Houſes then took in all thoſe Debates, that none of thoſe Supplies ſhould be provided for by a Land Tax, whilſt there could any other way poſſibly be found out, or thought upon; and thoſe

ſmall

ſmall helps, as the Exciſe on the Law &c. which were ſo long a raiſing but a very inconſiderable Sum, at laſt cannot be look'd upon to ſtand the King and Kingdom in any ſtead, ſhould there be any extraordinary occaſion for Money. If we ſhould expect any ſupply from the Merchant, and from Trade, they will tell you that there is as much Cuſtome and Exciſe laid upon all ſorts of Commodities as the Trade is able to bear; This ſhall be the general Anſwer of the whole Body of Merchants, and the Whole-ſale-dealers throughout the Kingdom, eſpecially in *London*, ſo that little help is to be expected from them. Have we not reaſon then to endeavour the Reſtoring our Lands and Rents to their former value and eſteem, when we have hardly any other way left for the Preſervation of our Lives, Eſtates, yea, and our Trade too: for ſhould there be any extraordinary Occaſion for a ſpeedy ſupply of Money, when all Heads and Wits are puzl'd which way to raiſe it; there can be no ſpeedier way poſſibly found out, then by a Land Tax (or Subſidy) which is much the ſame, provided our Lands and Rents may be raiſed to their former value and eſteem.

This being then the true ſtate of the Caſe, and the Condition we are fallen into, ſince the beginning of the late Wars; let us now proceed to examine the Cauſes of this great Miſchief, to make way for remedying the ſame; and theſe may be ſum'd up into theſe two grand ones (to wit) Our Wool, and Cattel, the latter of which was endeavour'd to be provided for, by that *Iriſh* Act which utterly prohibited the bringing in of any ſort of Cattel out of *Ireland* into this Kingdom, upon forfeiture thereof; when there was the ſame Reaſon, at the very ſame time, againſt the Importation of their Wool, (to wit) to prevent the beating down the Rents of that part of the Kingdom which depended moſt upon breeding.

Let us now proceed, and enquire into the Reaſons of the low Rates and Prices of our Wool, and we ſhall find

find that we may bring them under these few chief Heads.

First then, The great quantity of *Spanish* Wool sold here at very low Rates, and that made into Cloth, and the most part of it (to our shame) worn by our Selves; is a very great Cause of the Abatement and low Price of ours.

Secondly, The not wearing, and other ways using the Cloth made of our own Wool, both by our selves at Home, and by our People in our several Plantations abroad, may be look'd upon as another Cause of the great Abatement of the Price of Wool.

Thirdly, The decaying Condition of the Merchant-Adventurers, and *Hamborough* Company, who did formerly send away so many of our *English* Cloths into *Germany*, and all those Eastern Parts of *Europe*, more than now they do, may be reckon'd another Cause of the low Price of Wool.

Fourthly, The not making our Cloth of that Size and Substance as it ought to be, as by several Statutes to that purpose, it may appear, and for which the Alnage Office was at first Establish'd.

And Lastly, The great Abuses and Cheats of late years put upon our Clothiers, by the Brokers and Factors at *Blackwell-Hall*, to the breaking and undoing of many of our young Clothiers, especially if their stocks be small; These may be accounted some of the chief Causes of the great Abatement and low Price of our Wool.

We will Examine them in their Order. And first, concerning the *Spanish* Wool. If we look no farther back than 1660, the Year of his Majesties happy Restauration, We shall find that the Superfine *Spanish* Wool (as they term it) was sold for four shillings, and four shillings and four pence the pound, and the other sorts at three shillings, and three shillings and six pence the pound, according as it was in goodness: And our Wool at that time was sold for sixteen pence and eighteen pence the pound. Now this present year

1684, and seven or eight years since, the Superfine *Spanish* Wool, is not worth above two shillings, or two shillings and two pence the pound, and the other sorts at twenty pence and two and twenty pence the pound; and our Wool will not yield above seven pence or eight pence a pound; so that in less than twenty years time our Wool is fallen the one half and more; and so long as the *Spanish* Wool is sold at this low Rate, it is not likely that our own can Advance in price: And if so, then our Rents, especially those Farms that depend most upon Corn and Sheep, must continue at this low Ebb they are now at, if they fall no lower. The removal then of this great Mischief, is the next thing we are to Consider; and herein I must content my self to receive the Censures of several Persons of the contrary Party, I mean those Persons whose Fortunes and Imployments lye principally in the Buying, not growing of this Commodity; but they are not so many.

First then, *Spanish* Wool must of necessity Advance something towards the price it was formerly at, when our Wool yielded sixteen pence and eighteen pence the pound: For that being so much finer than ours, and bearing but a low Price, we cannot expect ours should Rise; and if this Advance of the *Spanish* Wool is not to be expected from abroad, then we must endeavour what can be done at home.

If some Duty or Custom were laid upon it (I shall not presume to propose the Sum) so as to bring it to bear a considerable Rate, his Majesty by this means would receive a good Addition to his Revenue, and our Wool would be brought to a considerable Price. As for the Prohibiting this or most other Foreign Commodities, we may find upon Examination, and by Experience too, that that way will not so well answer our Design, as the laying a sufficient Duty upon them more or less according to the quality of the Commodity. I will Instance only in the *Irish* Act; if ten or twenty shillings, more or less, upon a Bullock,

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and five shillings upon a Sheep, or thereabouts, had been laid as a Duty upon them, instead of Prohibiting them; we had not only continued still our Trade and Commerce with them, but his Majesty had received ere this many a Thousand pound for his Custom. For, as the Case now stands, the King receives no Advantage by them; his Officers in all Ports where they are landed (being not obliged by their Office, take no notice of them) do rather help the concealing them, than any way endeavour a seizure: Which if otherwise, they were then all bound by their Offices to receive his Majesties Duty; and then each Bullock and Sheep paying so much Custom, they could not under-sell us, which was the great Design of that Act, *viz.* The keeping up the price of our *English* Cattel, so that an Impost upon Wool, as well as all other Commodities, will better Answer our Interest and Designs against them than a Prohibition: for here can be no other shift, if the Officers be honest and careful, but the paying their Money.

But here will arise an Objection.

If this should be so, that a Duty should be imposed upon the *Spanish* Wool, then would the *Dutch* and other Nations get away our Trade, by under-selling us in all Places where *Spanish* Cloth is a Commodity: for if we must pay dearer for our Wooll than they, we cannot expect to have any Trade (with them) where this Commodity is vended: for neither will our Clothiers make it, or our Merchants buy it, if they cannot see some probability of Profit and Advantage.

To this Objection; We must believe that the *Dutch* are a People that will lose no Opportunity of Profit where they can get it; and if they could vend more *Spanish* Cloth than they do, we must also believe they would make more if they could; they having the same liberty to buy the Wool as well as we, but there is little danger of their getting this Trade from us this way. For they have their hands as full

already, and do make as much Cloth as they have People to imploy about it, with respect to their other Business and Manufactures.

As to the other part of the Objection, that concerns the *Dutch*, that if we give more for *Spanish* Wool than they, then we must of course be under-sold by them, and so by consequence lose our Trade.

We must first be inform'd what sort of *Spanish* Cloth it is they chiefly make, and where it is vended, to do us this hurt. As for the sorts of Cloth they make, they are most blacks, and many of them sold here, and worn by our selves; and this I hope may be remedied; but for the *Medlies*, I suppose they make but few, for the *French* and others with whom we trade for them, cannot be furnish'd by any other Nation in the World but by us: so that if we raise the price of them among our selves, we shall not be in danger to be under-sold by the *Dutch*.

But what is all this to that which we have to say for our selves? Here is a fourth part of the real Value at least of our Kingdom within these few years lost, and that principally by the fall in price of this one Commodity; and we have no way possibly left to raise Money upon any urgent Occasion, but by our Estates. And have we not reason then (as I said before) to endeavour our utmost to restore them to their former value and esteem again. Which way had it been possible for the Nation, in the late War, to have maintained so many vast Armies in all Parts and Corners thereof, had not that War begun upon us in the very height of our Wealth and Plenty, when our Wool at that time was worth three times the price it now yields, with a full Trade for our Cloth both at home and abroad; especially into *Germany*, *Sweden*, and all those Eastern Countries; and our Cattel then paid sufficient profit, both to the Breeder and Grasier, and Gold was as plenty with us then, as it was in *Jerusalem* in the Reign of King *Solomon*; there

was

was no throwing of Farms into the Landlords hands, no Complaining of hard Rents, every Commodity of ours then yielded a Profit, for we had a Conſumption for them, and the Poor could not want Victuals, when the Kitchin was accounted the beſt Room in the Houſe. But to proceed.

The ſecond cauſe of this great Abatement of the price of our Wool, may be this, *viz.* The wearing and uſing of ſo much *Spaniſh* Cloth our ſelves, both at home and in our ſeveral Plantations abroad; whereas if we were but injoyn'd to wear, and otherwiſe to uſe no Cloth but what is made of our own *Engliſh* Wool, we ſhould find ſome alteration in the price of it in few years; and I doubt not but our Clothiers could pick out enough of the fineſt ſort of it to make Cloth very little inferiour to the *Spaniſh*. And it is eaſie to be made appear, that we ſpend as much *Spaniſh* Cloth in our own Kingdoms and Plantations belonging to the Crown of *England* (and a great part of that too not manufactur'd by our own People, as *Dutch* black) as is worn in all the Kingdoms of the World beſides, and more. So that if any ſhall object againſt the laying a Duty upon the *Spaniſh* Wool, I hope they will give us leave to enjoyn our own People to wear no Cloth but what is manufactured by our ſelves, and made of our own Wool; and if this Conſumption of our Cloth at home be added but to that Trade we have yet left abroad for it, we ſhould ſoon find an Increaſe in the price of our Wool. And I know no reaſon why any ſhould be offended with us for endeavouring our own Intereſt and Advantage, the general deſign of all Nations: neither can this ſpending of our own Cloth among our ſelves hinder any thing of our Trade abroad.

And that this may appear to be no new or upſtart Project, the Statutes of 2 *Edward* the 3. Cap. 1. 2. 3. may ſufficiently ſatisfie us; in which Kings Reign it was, that the Manufacture of our Wool began to be our Nati-

onal

onal Employment. For among all our Staple Commodities, Wool had at that time the Precedency, as being the most principal and ancient Commodity of the Kingdom, wherein the generality of the People were deeply concern'd; and the Manufacture of it, though of long use among our selves, yet it received but little Encouragement for a Trade into Foreign Parts, till these times; the *Flemmings* having the principal Manufacture then by the continual supply of Wool that they received from hence.

But the Wisdom of this great Prince soon discern'd of what unspeakable value the Manufacture of our own Wool would be to the Trade of this Kingdom; who, like a provident and careful Father, look'd farther than his present time; and who, being well acquainted with the *Flemmings* Affairs, by a joynt Engagement with them in the War with *France*, had therein gain'd so good an Opinion amongst them, that he might adventure to change a Complement for a Courtesie; the Staples where our Wool was sold being now taken clean away, and by the Statute of 2. *Edw.* 3. Cap. 1. made Felony to carry any Wool out of the Realm: He now prosecutes his Design for the setling of the Manufacture at home, and represents to those *Flemmings* the Danger they were in by the bordering Wars with *France*, and the peacable Condition of *England*, and freedom of the People that are Subjects here; Propounds an Invitation for them to come over hither, wherein he promises them the same Privileges and Immunities with his own Subjects: which they accepted, and came over, and brought their Manufacture with them, which could never after be removed hence. So as now the Manufacture and our Wool were joyned together; and so long as they agree together, both will thrive; but if they once part, (as the *Spanish* Wool at this time puts fair at it) they will both be losers in the Conclusion.

The Manufacture of our Wool being brought to this Settlement at home, this Heroick King *Edward* the Third,

makes

makes this other Statute in the same 11th year of his Reign, That no Merchant, Foreign or *Denizen*, nor any other, after the Feast of St. *Michael*, shall cause to be brought privately, or openly by himself, nor by any other into the said Lands of *England*, *Ireland*, *Wales*, and *Scotland*, within the Kings Power, any Cloths made in any other Places than in the same, upon forfeiture of the said Cloth, and further to be punished at the Kings Will, as is aforesaid.

But because this Nation formerly had been, and still is too much wedded to the wearing of Foreign Manufactures; the importing of which did hinder the using of our own home-made Manufactures; (for too much of them make our own a Drug, our Nation Poor, and our People to want Work) As a Cure for this Disease, our own *English* Cloth is enjoyn'd by a Law to be worn by all Persons under the Degree of a Lord; and then the Wisdom of the times thought fit to provide for the true and perfect making of Cloth; several Statutes were made in this Kings time, *Richard* the Second, and were also confirm'd by Queen *Elizabeth*, and King *James*; but especially in the fifth year of *Edward* the 6th Cap. 6. For the Length, Breadth, Weight, and Goodness of all sorts of Cloth; with several Provisos to prevent Frauds and Abuses both in the making and selling thereof: such care our Ancestors have had in all former and latter Ages, for the improvement of this our Woollen Manufacture, by which we may plainly see of what absolute Necessity it is to be encouraged and advanced: Shall it now by us (after so much Care and Industry used by them to settle and bring it to our Doors, and into our very Houses) be neglected, and scarce thought worth the Entertainment, for fear of I know not what Jealousies of disobliging some Foreign Nation, by putting a Duty on their Wool. Shall their Wisdom and Prudence that judg'd this Manufacture and Trade for it, the great Support and and Glory of our Nation, be call'd in question by our care-

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lesnes; and shall we suffer our selves to be thus cheated of it, when we are as wellable to maintain and defend it as they; and by Experience find, that it is our chiefest, if not only Manufacture and Support of the Strength, Honour, and Wealth of our *English* Nation. For which way can we continue a Trade long, that have no Money of our own growth, but only what is brought unto us for Commodities; and if we can find nothing of our own to barter and exchange for, we must in short time sink our trade abroad, if we intend to keep our Money at home; our Staple Commodities must therefore of Necessity be advanc'd and encourag'd, to enable us by the return thereof, to hold a Commerce with those Parts of the World that must supply us: for if Trade be maintained barely out of the main Stock, the Kingdom in time must needs be decay'd, and so brought to Penury; it being our Magazin.

A third Cause of the great Abatement and low Price of our Wool may be this, *viz.* The decaying Condition of the Merchant-Adventurers, and *Hamborough* Company within these few years; a Company that vended many thousands of our *English* Cloths yearly; for after that our Staples for Wool were taken away, and the Manufacture of our Cloth setled among us, this Company also had their Motion from *Flanders* through *Holland*, untill at last it came to be fixed, for the conveniency of those *Eastern* Countries, at *Hamborough*. And it would not be needless if the discreetest of them were advised with, to know the Reasons they can give of this loss or decay, at least, of their Trade in *Germany*, and all those adjoyning Kingdoms. For a Trade of so large extent, and vast concernment to us, ought not thus easily to be parted with. And there may possibly, upon such an enquiry, something appear, that a great cause of this decay of that Trade proceeds from our selves; which if so, there may then be some way found out to recover that Ancient Company of the Merchant-Adventurers, their

Trade,

Trade, Credit, and Esteem again; the only Company that transported most part of our *English* Cloth. And we may more then probably guess, that the two following and remaining Causes of the low Price of our Wool, which I propos'd, to wit, the not making of our Cloth of that size and substance as it ought to be, and as it was order'd in former times to be made, as by the several Statutes before recited may appear; and the Cheats and Abuses of the Brokers and Factors at *Blackwell-hall* (a sort of People never heard of there, before the beginning of the late Rebellion; and in those times there seized, that their Masters, who first granted them their Charter, and made them a Corporation, might have the more time and leisure to attend their other Imployments of more weightier and publick Concernment) might be a great means to help ruin this our Trade. But for the regulating a Business of so great a concern, I shall not presume to propose the Method; there will be Application sufficient from all parts of the Kingdom, were there a Committee appointed purposely for this Business; whereby we might have some Hopes and Encouragement that our *English* Cloth may be a Commodity again. And upon their Arraignment, there will be Bills plenty enough brought in for their Conviction: For, from Men not worth much when the device began, they are now many of them worth 5, and 10000 *l.* and some of them 40 and 50000 *l.* a Man; while many of the lower Rank of our Clothiers daily break and run away; those men by their Wiles and Tricks creeping into their Estates: for they have brought the Trade to that pass, there shall not now be a Cloth sold in a Market-day at *Blackwell-hall*, by many of our Clothiers, if these men have not the selling of it; and it would grieve a mans Heart to see how harmlesly the poor Clothier waits at the heels of his Factor all the day long whither he pleases to lead him; and when he puts into a Drapers Shop, he hears of nothing but of bad Trading, uncomfortable News, and no Mony stirring: for they are both agreed to send the poor man out of Town without selling a Cloth himself; neither shall he perhaps,

hear in a long time what is become of his Cloth, whether sold or not, untill it be for the Factor's Convenience to give him an account, or untill a Draper or a Cloth-Merchant or two break, and then 'tis ten to one but he may have an account, that some of his Cloth is gon that way: So that as the Manufacture of our Cloth is now managed wholly by private Interests and Designs, were our Trade abroad for it never so good, it is not probable (lying in such hands) it should ever be restored to its ancient Credit and Esteem. It therefore begs, and that earnestly, if we value the Strength, Honour and Wealth of our Nation, that we should use our utmost Endeavour to advance it to its just Worth and Reputation again, by freeing it from this great Monopoly, and to set it at that Liberty, that the laborious and careful Clothier, who not only spends his time, but hazards his Stock, and that small Fortune he began with, for his own Maintenance, and those many he doth imploy in his Trade, may have so much Favour as to sell his own Cloth himself; that what honest Profit can be made thereof, he who only deserves and takes pains for it, may receive it, to the Encouragement of that Manufacture, which must help the Price of our Wool, which must help the Advancement of our Rents, &c. And not the lazy Factor, whose only Labour is between *Blackwell-hall* and his Counting-house, and who suck the Gains from the honest Clothier, through the very Heart of himself, his Family, and all the Poor therein imploy'd, and thereby ruines our Trade, the great cause of the Abatement of Rents, and the Impoverishment of our Kingdom. And as these Factors are the greatest Enemies to this Trade in general, that either Malice or Envy could possibly set up, so if they be but narrowly look'd into, they will appear, for the most and richest part of them, as to their Principals to the present Government, the same with those who first brought them thither, and who, by the Influence they have upon the Buyers, and the Command they have upon the Clothiers, are able to draw more People into Faction and Rebellion, than any other sort of men in the Kingdom besides.

There would such another Generation of Men be brought to the Bar from *Smith-field* too, who put as great Injuries and Abuſes upon our young Graſiers eſpecially, by buying and ſelling of Cattel there, and yet Butchers by their Trade, who can either dull or raiſe the Markets at their Pleaſure; ſo that we may ſee into what hands the two great Commodities of our Kingdom of late years are got; but this latter only by the by. We will go on with our Woollen Manufacture, which being once more retriev'd, let the Alnage-Office have a whet, and be ſtrictly look into, that they ſhould not only receive their Fees, but perform their Duty, that we may rightly know how far ſhort our *Engliſh* Cloth will come to the *Spaniſh*, when well and truly made; that by this means we may recover it that Credit and Eſteem it once had, both at home and abroad. For methinks we are all aſleep; we ſee a Trade ſnatch'd from us to our Ruine, and yet ſeem to be unconcern'd; Nay, which is worſe, we help forward with it our ſelves; and though we are taken notice of ſufficiently, and jeer'd for the *French* Apes, an *Engliſh* man pictur'd with a piece of Cloth under his Arm, to chuſe his Faſhion, yet I thought it had been always underſtood to be Cloth made of his own Wool.

Having now given ſome particulars that may be great cauſes of the low Price of our Wool, with ſome ways and means for the reſtoring of it to its former value and uſe again, which each particular carries along with it; I ſhall wind up all with that Act of Parliament made ſome years ſince, for the burying in Woollen: and he that will but read that Act, may very well ſatisfie himſelf, that the Parliament were ſufficiently ſenſible of the great loſs we were like to be at, if ſome way or other were not found out to conſume our Wool; and certainly they were worthy Patriots for their Country, that firſt moved for, and afterwards purſu'd it to an Act, however it hath not been received or obeyed as it worthily deſerv'd; we will therefore examine, and give ſome Gueſs how much Wool might have been buried, ſince that Act of Parliament

was first made, without any Disparagement to the Dead, or to the surviving Friends of the Deceased; and we shall find that a very great part of the Wool now in the Kingdom, I speak as to the quantity, out of Cloth, had been at this day under Ground.

In *London* is buried one year with another (when no Plague or other Epidemical Distemper Reigns) about twenty thousand, which, by Observation of some, bears a seventh part with the Kingdom; so there dyes in *England* an hundred and forty thousand yearly, with the least; and we will allow two pounds of Wool for a Shrowd, one with another, which amounts to two hundred and eighty thousand pound of Wool yearly buried; so that in every ten years we shall spend this way about twenty hundred thousand Pounds, a good proportion of one years Growth; but with this Advantage to our Poor, that it is first made into Cloth. So that had that Act of Parliament been duely observed, as it was our Interest so to do, we may plainly perceive what quantity of Wool we had by this buryed in our own Kingdom of *England* (for I have not reckon'd either *Scotland*, *Ireland*, or any of our Plantations into this account) but if all could be brought within the compass of this Act, and the charge of seeing it punctually performed, carefully observed, we should not only spend in all these Kingdoms and Islands belonging to the Crown of *England*, a most incredible quantity of our own Wool manufactured by our selves, but save above threescore thousand Pounds Sterling a year of our Money, which we lay out for Linnen-Cloth purposely for that use, as may appear by examining this Charge by the former Rule; Equivalent to a Story we have of one of our Kings, who finding a great glut of Cloth in the Kingdom, beyond their Vent and Trade for it, bought it, and caused it all to be burnt. And the *Dutch*, those subtil Traders, as it is generally reported of them, when their Ships are fraighted with their Spices in the *East-Indies* for that years Provision into *Europe*, they return the rest in Smoak, by causing the overplus of that years growth to be burnt at their own Factories;

ctories; So that the Consumption of every growth of our Wool is of absolute Necessity towards the Improvement of our Rents, and for recovering that third or fourth part of the real Value of our Kingdom, now lost since the fall and low price thereof.

But before I conclude wholly with this Cloth-trade, the chief and only Manufacture of this Kingdom, I shall premise something by way of Quere, as a Remedy to this great Mischief; and whether it may prove of advantage to the growth, and Manufacture, and Trade of this Commodity, I shall leave it to far better Judgments to determine.

Suppose there were a Company of Merchants of this Staple, setled by Patent or Charter, as such Companies there are; the *East-India*, *Turkey*, &c. that should buy up in *Spain* every years growth of the *Spanish* Wool themselves, and thence transport it, or as much as they should judge convenient for our Trade, hither, to be manufactur'd by us; where a Duty should be impos'd upon it, according as it should be judg'd the Trade would bear, in order to the Advancement of our own; for there lies the bottom still of the Design. I ask the Question, Where would the Inconveniencies arise? For the Truth is, a Business of this Nature is more fit to be discours'd of by a Committee, than medled with by any private Person; I say, if such a Company were set up, what would be the Objections against it?

For, first, the *Spaniard* can receive no Prejudice by it; we shall by this means rather advance something the Price, than any way abate it.

And secondly, for the *Hollanders*, I suppose we should make no scruple of getting the Trade from them, for this Cloth Trade is our Ancient Right, and did alwayes belong to our Nation, and no other People in the World could in reason pretend to the Manufacture of it, the Staple growing upon our own Soil. And since there is now another sort of Wool started up within these few years, which proves to the Prejudice of ours; I see no Reason against me, if we can compass to make both our own and that too, but that we may justly

ingross

ingross it if we can, without offering any Injustice to our Neighbouring Nation; and then, what is their Growth and Manufacture, as Linnen-cloth, and the like, if they will quietly desist, and yield up this to us, as it is our Right, we may, I presume, be perswaded (I speak only for my self) to do the like by theirs.

But if we examine this Business a little farther, we shall find, that there may be a necessity for the laying a Duty upon this *Spanish* Wool; and that it will be impossible while the Trade is free, and that every man may buy and make what he please of this sort of Cloth, that ever our Wool should advance in price; for as the Rates now go, unless the *Spaniard* raise the Price, our Merchants will not, and our Clothiers drive the old Design in buying as cheap as they can; so that between them they will keep down the price of ours; for one man in a Fair or Market may beat down the Price of what he deals in, by under-selling his own Commodity, but where is all this *Spanish* Cloth made that doth us this harm? Were it the Manufacture of the whole Nation that kept all the Poor at work, there might be something said for it; but it is all made (I mean the Medlies) in the Corners of Two Shires, (to wit) *Somerset* and *Wiltshire*, and that within the compass of twenty or thirty miles at most; and not an hundred (I speak with the most) Principal Clothiers concern'd in the making of this *Spanish* Cloth; what damage can the Engrossing them of this *Spanish* Wool, or putting a Duty or Custom upon it do the Nation? It is very true, there are many that call for the Liberty of the People, that every Man may Buy and Sell as he please. And it were well if these Men would consider themselves as well in the Relative as in their own Personal Concerns: For if every Man were Independant, his Liberty were so too; but so long as any Man is a Member of a Kingdom, his Liberty must likewise depend upon the good of the same Kingdom. And if it be not good for a Nation that every man should buy and sell, and wear what he paid for, as he please, he must not think himself in-

jur'd,

jur'd, if his Liberty, as an English man, be confin'd, so long as his Country hath an Interest in his Commodity and Trade, for its Safety and Welfare as well as himself. So if the Trade for *Spanish* Wool, which is now at Liberty, were in the hands of one particular Company, it would not then lye in the power of any private Persons to sink the Trade and Manufacture of our Wool, as now they can: For certainly, a Liberty for a Private Trade, in some cases, may bring that Mischief upon the *Publick Concern* of a Nation, not easily to be removed again. I will only instance one Passage, which may be fresh in every man's memory, that had then any *Concern* in *Wool*, to shew what command the great Clothiers, Factors, and others have of that Commodity and the Trade for it.

When the Peace was last made with the *Dutch*, about ten years since, by the Mediation of the *Spanish* Ambassadour, and the *French* left wholly out in that Agreement, the price of our Wool, in less than a Months time, did rise from 18 *s.* and 19 *s.* to 25 *s.* and 26 *s.* the weight, that is a quarter part more than it would yield a Week before the News of that Agreement with *Holland*. But the Scene quickly shifted, for the Parliament being soon after Prorogued, our Wool did not so fast advance before, but now it came tumbling down; so that it return'd not only in a Week or Fortnights time to its former price, but pass'd by without any stay or stop, until it was almost impossible to run lower, even to 12, and 13 *s.* the weight.

What should be the reason of this? was there more Wool now discover'd, or was there like to be less Trade? Certainly, there was as much Wool in the Kingdom of our own growth an hundred years ago as now; We have no increase of Sheep; for all those Lands that now feed, (to wit) our Downs and Sheep-Pastures, could never be employ'd to other Use. Then it must be in the Trade. And if so, then we may see where the Command of that lyes; as those Dealers like the Motions of the Times, they shall either advance or sink it at their pleasure, for the Trade lies sullen, and must be rows'd;

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it hath been ſo long manag'd by ſome particular Perſons, that they now look upon it, not ſo much the Staple Manufacture, and chief Commodity we have to ſupport the Wealth and Honour of our Nation, as a Buſineſs only for ſome few men to gain Wealth and Eſtates by. But to proceed.

Now what quantity of this *Spaniſh* Wool is brought yearly into this Kingdom, and here made into Cloth, and how much of it is tranſported when made, is worth our Enquiry. And upon this Enquiry, I doubt it will appear, that there is as much *Spaniſh* Cloth ſpent and worn among our own People, as the *Spaniſh* Wool will make that is imported; for in lieu of thoſe few Medlies we ſend abroad in Trade, we have a ſupply of Blacks, *&c.* brought out of *Holland* to us, and here ſold at double the rate of that made in our own Kingdom of the ſame goodneſs: For at this day the very Servants and Mechanicks, eſpecially in Towns and Cities, will ſcorn to wear any Cloth but *Spaniſh*, if their Purſes can but reach the price. It is not many years ſince that *Spaniſh* Cloth of the ſame goodneſs they now make, was ſold for 23 *s.* and 24 *s.* the yard by the Clothier, which he now ſells for 15 *s.* and 16 *s.* the yard: and ſo long as it can be bought at this low price, there is ſcarce a Cobler but will have his beſt Suit of it. In a word, all the Ruine that hath happen'd to our Clothing Trade by the low price of our Wool, cannot be imputed to the Exportation of our *Engliſh* Wool, but to the Importation of the *Spaniſh*, and other Foreign Wool, without paying any Duty or Cuſtom for the ſame. And this, among other Grievances attending the Clothing Trade, the Grand Jury of the County of *Somerſet*, at their General Quarter Seſſions, preſented as the *Grievance* and *Complaint* of the whole *County*: the which I have here ſet down *verbatim*, as it was to have been preſented to the late Kings moſt Excellent *Majeſty*, in *Council*.

Somerset. *At the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace held at* Brewton, *in and for the County aforesaid, on the Thirteenth day of* January *in the Thirty Sixth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord* Charles the Second, *by the Grace of God of* England, Scotland, France, *and* Ireland, *King*, &c. *The Presentment of the* Grand Jury *there was as followeth*; viz.

HEARING the daily sad and lamentable Complaint of the greatest part of the Clothiers of this County, concerning the great Decay of their Trade, whereby many of them with in few years last past have been ruin'd and undone; And finding by sad experience the great fall that is happened of late on the price of Eng-

liſh Wool, that Commodity now yielding but little more than the one half the Value of what it was wont to be ſold for at the beginning of the late unhappy Rebellion in this Kingdom; And having ſeriouſly conſidered theſe things, do humbly conceive the Cauſes of theſe great Evils to be the Importation of *Spaniſh* and other Foreign Wools, without paying any Cuſtom or Impoſt for the ſame; And the great Abuſes that have been put upon the Clothiers at the Principal Mart for Cloth in this Kingdom, by a ſort of People called Factors; Men firſt ſet up in the late Times of Diſtraction, and increaſing ever ſince in Number and Power, till now at length they have gotten the ſole Command and Sale of moſt mens Cloth brought thither to be ſold; And have thereby advanc'd themſelves from little or nothing to be Men of great Eſtates, and as much impoveriſhed their Maſters, who ſadly complain of theſe

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Abuſes, and are left without proſpect of a Remedy: The Conſideration of which Miſchiefs growing more and more upon us, and, if not timely prevented, being likely in the end to prove the Ruine of this ancient Staple Commodity and Manufacture of our Kingdom, hath cauſed us at this time to make this following Preſentment.

Firſt, That the Wool of this County in particular, as well as of the whole Kingdom in general, is the greateſt Staple we have; And that which adds more to the Rents and Improvement of the Real Value of the Lands and Revenues thereof, than any one Commodity whatſoever; And that it is as much our Intereſt (if not more) to improve the Rents and Revenues of the Lands and Eſtates of this Kingdom, as to Maintain the Trade, without which Improvement we ſhall in no caſe be able to raiſe any

conſiderable Sum of Money by a Land-Tax, if any ſudden or extraordinary occaſion ſhould require it.

We Preſent therefore, That the Importation of Spaniſh, and other Foreign Wools, without paying any Duty or Cuſtom for the ſame, is a very great prejudice to the price of Engliſh Wool; and ſo conſequently contributes much to the Abatements of the Rents and Profits iſſuing from Lands.

We Preſent, That the making of Woollen Cloth is the greateſt Manufacture of this Kingdom, and that wherein many thouſands of poor People are employed and ſet to work, and thereby Relieved and Maintained; and that ſince the time that the Art of Clothing was firſt known amongſt us, it has continued free, untill the beginning of the late Rebellion, there ſprung up a ſort of People, who,

under

under the name of Factors of *Blackwell-Hall*, have gotten into their Power the Management and Diſpoſal of moſt of the Cloth that is ſold there: And beſides, are grown to be the greateſt Merchants of Oyl and Dying-ſtuffs, but chiefly of Spaniſh Wool; all goods belonging to the Clothing Trade, of whom the Clothier is forced to buy, the Factor having his Stock both of Cloth and Money in his own hands; And therefore We preſent, that theſe Factors of *Blackwell-Hall* are a Publick Nuſance and Prejudice to the Clothing Trade; and to have been the Ruine of many poor Clothiers, and the Cauſes of many other Miſchiefs and Inconveniencies that now lye heavy upon us.

Item, We farther Preſent, that this Honourable Bench will be pleaſed to implore the Royal Power and Prerogative of His Sacred Majeſty, for convenient Remedies to theſe great Abuſes; And that

that this Presentment may be with all Submission presented to His Majesty as the Grievance and Complaint of the whole County.

Thomas Ludwell,
Joseph Gappy,
Barnard Ruff:
William Ridout,
Thomas Pitman,
John Bradny,
John Mulford Sen.
Thomas Gapper Jun.
Thomas Field,
William Lewis,
Thomas Biging,
Thomas Harvye,
John Mabz,
Wor. Brice,
Henry Strode,
Gabriel Iveleife,
Robert King.

Vera

Vera Cop' Ex' per Ph. Bennet, Cl. Pac.

This is a true Copy of the Grand Juries Preſentment, which we agree to, and deſire it may be preſented to His Majeſty in Council by Mr. *Clarke*.

Weymouth.
Fitzharding.
Fra. Powlett.
E. Phelipps.
John Hunt.
Ed. Berkeley.
Tho. Wyndham.
Fra. Warre.
Will. Baſſet.
Geo. Clarke.
Jo. Harington.